

Crawford-Cassin House
3017 O Street, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-184

HABS
DC
GEO
107-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

CRAWFORD-CASSIN HOUSE

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Location: 3017 O Street, N.W. (Georgetown), Washington, D.C.
The house is located on the north side of O Street (formerly Beall) between 30th and 31st Street, the west wall being approximately 175' from 30th Street.

Present Owner: Mrs. Ray Atherton

Present Occupant: Same

Present Use: Private Residence

Statement of
Significance:

3017 O Street is a handsome example of a large free-standing Federal house. Documents as early as 1818 refer to the house as a "mansion." It is one of the few houses in Georgetown that still retains the two story side porch. Architectural evidence indicates the original entry may possibly have been on the east (porch) side. At one time the gardens of the property extended to 30th Street to the east and to P Street on the north. The house is still accessible from P Street by a private driveway. Early in the 20th century the building was altered and enlarged to be used as a private school. Today it is again a private residence.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in Square 1257, lot 840 (formerly Square 87 and parts of old lots 95, 96 and part of lot 200 forming the alley to P Street. The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property. The references are to the Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.

At the time of the cession of the District of Columbia lot 95 is supposed to have been owned by William Robertson, lot 96 by Samuel Thomas, and lot 200 by Thomas Beall.

- 1793 Deed August 30, 1793, recorded February 18, 1794 in
Liber A, folio 483
William Robertson
To
William Hammond Dorsey
Includes lot 95
- 1794 Deed March 20, 1794, recorded July 12, 1794 in
Liber B, folio 51
Samuel Thomas
To
Samuel Davidson
William Craik
William Hammond Dorsey
Conveys lots 96 and 97 to hold as tenants in
common without the benefit of survivorship
- 1797 Deed April 24, 1797, recorded September 12, 1797 in
Liber C, folio 152
Samuel Davidson
William H. Dorsey
To
William Craik
Lot 96
- 1812 Deed April 8, 1812, recorded October 15, 1812 in
Liber AD, folio 338
Edmund Jennings Lee,
Executor of the last Will and Testament of William Craik
To
George French
Lot 96
- 1814 Deed March 16, 1814, recorded September 13, 1814 in
Liber AH, folio 200
William Hammond Dorsey
To
George French
Lot 95
- Deed May 13, 1814, recorded November 12, 1814 in
Liber AH, folio 292
George French
To
Richard Smith
Lots 96 and 97
Consideration: \$1,353.00

1819 Deed April 22, 1819, recorded October 22, 1819 in
Liber AW, folio 160
Richard Smith
To
Sarah Crawford
Lots 95, 96 and 97
Consideration: \$12,500.00

1833 Deed December 17, 1833, recorded December 20, 1833 in
Liber WB 64, folio 1
Richard Smith
To
Stephen Cassin
"Conveys the dwelling house, garden and premises
situated on the corner formed by the intersection
of Washington and Beall Streets... and contracted
in writing further to convey to said Sarah Crawford,
dec'd...10' ground...for an alley to said dwelling
house, garden and premises. The said Sarah Crawford...
hath devised the house, gardens and premises to
Richard R. and Lorman Crawford who have since sold
said premises to Stephen Cassin."

1861 Deed September 11, 1861, recorded February 4, 1862 in
Liber JAS 215, folio 284
Joseph R. Cassin, Trustee
To
Joseph Libbey
Lots 96 and 97

Deed August 6, 1861, recorded January 8, 1862 in
Liber JAS 216, folio 139
Joseph R. Cassin, Trustee
To
Isabella Davis
Lot 95 and the alley in lot 200 connecting
with West Street
Consideration: \$6,500.00

Deed October 3, 1861, recorded January 8, 1862 in
Liber JAS 216, folio 114
Joseph Libbey
To
Isabella Davis
"Part of lot 96 (west 22') from corner of
Charles W. Amy's house."

- 1884 Deed April 7, 1884, recorded April 17, 1884 in
Liber 1082, folio 49
Francis R. R. Bromwell
Isabella Hagner, Executors of the Will of Isabella Davis
To
I. Thomas Davis
Lot 95, part of lot 96 and the alley
- 1890 Deed November 15, 1890, recorded November 15, 1890 in
Liber 1540, folio 259
I. Thomas Davis et ux Anna
To
Harry W. Blunt
- 1896 Deed January 7, 1896, recorded January 4, 1896 in
Liber 2096, folio 20
Harry W. Blunt
To
Edmund C. Blunt
Harriet W. Blunt
Virginia Blunt
Harry W. Blunt, Jr.
William Laird Blunt
- 1902 Deed June 9, 1902, recorded June 17, 1902 in
Liber 2637, folio 412
William A. Gordon
Maurice J. Adler, Trustees
To
Charles H. Cragin
Sold for default under trust from Harry W. Blunt,
November 15, 1890, recorded in Liber 1534, folio
382.
- 1903 Deed February 14, 1903, recorded March 5, 1903 in
Liber 2707, folio 251
Charles H. Cragin et ux Elizabeth
To
Eliza C. Smith
Sarah Elizabeth Edwards

1935 Deed March 28, 1935, recorded March 29, 1935 in
Liber 6875, folio 330
Sarah Elizabeth Edwards,
surviving joint tenant of
Elizabeth C. Smith, dec'd
To
Sarah W. S. Miller
Consideration Stamp: \$25.00

1937 Deed March 30, 1937, recorded April 6, 1937 in
Liber 7095, folio 19
Sarah W. S. Miller
To
Rachel C. Hale

1942 Deed August 7, 1942, recorded August 11, 1942 in
Liber 7781, folio 519
Rachel C. Hale
To
Ray Atherton

2. Date of erection: The Georgetown Assesment Records of 1815 (National Archives, Microcopy 605, Group 351, roll 10) give the following information:
November 30, 1816:
Richard Smith
Large 2 Story new B. H. Kitchen [?] \$6,000
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans, construction, etc: None known
5. Alterations and additions: The house has undergone major changes, the most important being the possible shifting of the entry from the east to the south side as well as the possibility of a change in the site of the present south main entry. The rear portion consists of 19th century additions. The interior presents many Victorian alterations.
6. Important old views: None found.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. Washington city directories provide the following tenant information:

1830	Sarah Crawford.. Beall Street, near Washington
1853	Com. Cassin. N.W. corner Beall and Washington
1855	Com. Cassin, USN. 112 Beall
1858-82	Isabella Davis and members of her family. [The address varies from 114 and 94 Beall to 3015 and 3017 O Street]
1888	Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leupp
1893	Beverly Randolph Mason, Professor
1911-18	St. Agnes School for Girls (Episcopal)
1919-35	Epiphany School, Sister of the Epiphany
1936	Vacant
1938-42	Mrs. Rachel Hale
1943	Ray Atherton
1948	Mrs. Shevlin
1956-68	Mrs. Ray Atherton

2. The Georgetown Assessments give the following additional tax information:

Roll 11 (1818-19)

Richard Smith

Lot 95 Bealls	60 Beall	\$800
Lot 95 Bealls	60 Beall	\$900
Lot 97 Bealls	60 Beall, 120 Washington	\$1100
	Mansion Brick	
Part 93 Bealls	20 Washington	\$300

Roll 12 (1865-70)

Isabella Davis

Lot 95 and 96	82' N.S. Beall Street	
120' deep		145 \$2,450
Improvements large three-story brick		
dwelling and stable		145 \$7,500
N. part lot 200. 10' S. side West		
Street 120' deep.		
Used as an alley		350 \$300

3. Commander Stephen Cassin, the second known occupant of the house, was an important naval officer. He was born in Philadelphia in 1783 and entered the Navy in 1800. For his brave action in the battle of Lake Champlain in the war of 1812, he was awarded a gold medal by Congress in 1814. Later he became the master-commandant of an 18-gun sloop-of-war, Peacock, and captured five pirate ships in

the West Indies. Commander Cassin was married to the daughter of an English army officer, Captain Abernethy. He died in Georgetown, August 29, 1857. (The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, vol. XII, p. 263.)

4. Beverly Mason was the first occupant to use the house as a school. In 1893 she opened her school, Gunston Hall, in this house, but moved elsewhere after only one year. From 1911 to 1918 the St. Agnes School for Girls was in the house. Then in 1919 two Episcopal sisters opened the School of the Epiphany. A report on the school at the Bishop's office of the Washington National Cathedral dated May 31, 1920, gives the following as the purpose of the school: "...to meet the needs of persons of moderate means..." and reports that there were four teachers and thirty-two female pupils. The school was run "by the hard labor of the Sisters of the Epiphany."
5. Mr. Ray Atherton who purchased the house in 1942 was a member of the U.S. Foreign Service. He was the acting chief of the European Division of the Department of State, 1940-1943, then first American Ambassador to Canada. After retiring from the Foreign Service in 1948, he was appointed an alternate delegate to the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly Meeting, Paris, 1948. Mr. Atherton died in 1960; his wife still occupies the house. (Who Was Who in America, vol. 3, p. 952.)

Prepared by Ellen J. Schwartz
Architectural Historian
Commission of Fine Arts
October, 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This Federal brick mansion presents a very ordered facade to O Street, which gives little hint of the various renovations and alterations

the building has suffered. In fact, the disposition of the bearing walls in the basement, the bricked up openings in the west wall, the floor patches where partitions have been relocated, the original position of the drawing room, fireplace, etc., seem to indicate that the east was possibly the original entrance front of the house, though the stucco at the two-story porch there would have to be removed for further study to support this theory. Basically a much-remodeled early nineteenth century house, its mid-Victorian additions set the character and provide an elegant background for the present owner's collection of fine antiques.

2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition throughout, considering the many alterations and additions over the years.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This three story brick residence faces south onto O Street, between 30th and 31st Streets, with its east wall approximately 170' to the west of the centerline of 30th Street. The main block of the house is approximately 34' deep and the three-story northwest wing is approximately 18' 6" by 38'. The O Street facade is four bays wide and is 37' in length.
2. Foundations: The brick foundation is exposed approximately 4' across the front (south) elevation, sloping along the sides to approximately 2' across the rear (north) elevation.
3. Wall construction: The brick bearing walls of the main block are of Flemish bond face brick on the south elevation; running bond with header courses every sixth course on the west and north elevations; and Flemish bond, with stucco covering the back walls of the porches on the east elevation. The brick bearing walls of both one-story and three-story wings are running bond with header courses every sixth course.
4. Framing: Interior partitions are of stud wall construction with the exception of the east wall of the entry hall, the north wall of the southwest first floor room, and the north and east walls of the southwest second floor room, which are plastered masonry.

5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: At the main entrance on the south front are five red sandstone steps leading up to a sandstone stoop with simple wrought-iron railings on each side. On the east end of the main block is a two-story frame porch 8' by 32'. It has five full-height square columns with chamfered corners, simple wood railings, and a modillioned cornice. The first floor ceiling is of flat boards while the second floor ceiling is of beaded boards. Five wood steps lead down to the garden level at the east.
6. Chimneys: There are chimneys on the east and west sides of the main block, and one in the center of the north-west wing.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front (south) door has six raised panels, sidelights, and an elliptical transom light. This is all of recent manufacture and there are traces of a taller earlier entranceway at the same location. The north door into the northeast wing (dining room) is a modern flush door. This doorway has a small hood over it. There is also a five-panel door at the northwest corner into the kitchen wing.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First floor windows of the main block are generally six over six, 12" by 20" light, double-hung wood sash. Second floor windows of the main block are generally six over six, 12" by 18" light, double-hung wood sash. Third floor windows of the main block are six over six 12" by 14" light, double-hung wood sash. Windows in the north-east wing are six over six, 10" by 14" wood sash. The small enclosed porch at the north end of the northwest wing has a single leaf casement window with six 10" by 12" lights. The northeast window from the drawing room to the porch has two hinged panels below permitting its use as a door and appears to be of 19th century date. Several original basement sash windows remain, which are two light casements. There are shutters on the third floor of the northwest wing and the upper two floors of the main block although most of the other windows show traces of having had them. The three first floor windows of the south elevation, have been outfitted with mid-19th century iron balcony railings.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The roof of the main block is gabled with the ridge running east-west; the roof of the northwest wing is gabled with the ridge running north-south; and the roof of the north-east wing is a shed roof pitched down toward the east. All roofs are metal covered and painted.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The main block has a wood box cornice with modillions across the south elevation, two projected brick courses along the rakes of the east and west ends and along the north elevation. The northwest additions also have two projected brick courses as a cornice on the east, west, and north.
- c. Cupolas, dormers towers: None

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: The basement of the main block is divided into four unequal areas: the southwest contains the heating plant, the northeast has a brick herringbone floor, while the other three have concrete floors. The original masonry partition between the northwest and southwest spaces has been removed and replaced with a heavy steel lintel. The first floor of the main block (12' in floor to ceiling height) has a drawing room across the east end, a small study in the southwest corner, and an entry hall between the drawing room and study leading to the stair hall in the northwest corner. A small powder room has been added to the north of the small study. The northeast wing (8' 10" floor to ceiling) has its floor 7" below that of the main block and contains a library opening off the large drawing room, leading into the dining room in the northeast corner. The northwest wing contains a sewing room opening off the stair hall, a pantry, and the kitchen. The second floor of the main block (11' 5" in floor to ceiling height) has bedrooms in the southeast and south-west corners, a bath in the northeast corner (with its floor raised 7"), and the stairhall in the northwest corner. The second floor of the northwest wing (8' 9" in floor to ceiling height) has its floor 7" below that of the main block and has a room across the north

end, a hall along the west side with a stair down to the kitchen, a bedroom in the center of the east elevation, another bedroom south of that, and a bath against the main block. The third floor of the main block (10' 5" in floor to ceiling height) has bedrooms in the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners, each with an adjoining bath, and a stairhall in the northwest corner. The third floor of the northwest wing has a bedroom across the rear with a bath to the south, a hall along the west side, and a store room adjoining the main block.

2. Stairways: The main stair ascends from the south seven winders to the east and a straight run of eight risers along the north wall to a landing across the west end of the stair hall, from which seven more risers lead west to east to the second floor. From the second floor eleven risers run along the north wall to a landing at the west end, from which ten more risers lead to the third floor. This stair has a very heavy Victorian turned newel, heavy turned balusters, a broad handrail, and jigsawed scroll brackets at the tread ends. The lower run has a board-and-batten enclosure for the simple wood utility stair to the basement.

There is an enclosed wood stair from the kitchen to the second floor of the northwest wing ascending from north to south along the west wall, and a similar run beneath it from the kitchen to the laundry room below.

3. Flooring: In the main block and the first two floors of the northwest wing, there are 5" wide pine boards; the northeast wing and the top floor of the northwest wing have 3 1/4" oak strip flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are of painted plaster throughout.
5. Doorways and doors: There are several varieties of wood panelled doors throughout the house. The main block has typically six-panel doors with flat panels and wide quirked cyma sticking on the first and second floors, and six-panel doors with raised panels and ovolo sticking on the third floor. There are also a few modern stock six-panel doors and a few copies of early six-panel doors scattered throughout. The northeast wing has modern copies of the living

room doors throughout, and the first and second floors of the northwest wing have a variety of both molded and unmolded four and five-panel mid-nineteenth century doors. The third floor has modern stock six-panel doors throughout. Pairs of doors occur at the entrance to the drawing room from the hall and between the library and dining room.

6. Decorative features and trim: First floor trim in the main block is typically 10" wide with a deep backband, second floor trim in the main block is the same molded trim 7" wide without the backband, and third floor trim in the main block is a 3" wide quirked cyma molding. Picture molding occurs frequently throughout, though cornices do not. The library in the northeast wing has built in bookcases with small corinthian pilasters, a molded chair rail, and a cornice with picture molding, all of mid-twentieth century manufacture. The first and second floors of the northwest wing have the same 3" quirked cyma molding as the third floor of the main block, while the third floor of the north-west wing has 3 1/2" wide stock modern trim.
7. Notable hardware: There is a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century hardware throughout, that on the first floor of the main block being particularly fine though not original to the doors bearing it.
8. Lighting: There are no notable fixtures.
9. Heating: There is a boiler in the southwest corner of the basement, with radiators throughout the house.

The drawing room mantelpiece, while not original, is particularly fine. It is of white marble with an arched opening having grape carvings in the spandrels and a bunch of grapes in the keyblock. It has been converted to a wood burning fireplace by reducing the height of the opening. The southwest study has a wood mantelpiece with a simple Tudor arch supported on flat pilasters. A similar mantelpiece occurs in the southeast bedroom on the second floor and the southeast bedroom on the third floor. The southwest second floor bedroom mantel has full-round Tuscan columns at each side supporting square impost blocks with a broad Greek ovolo bedmould under the shelf. The 10" entablature is horizontally reeded.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Situated well back from and above O Street, the house appears somewhat aloof from its younger neighbors on each side; though the neighborhood is composed of row houses and semi-detached larger houses, this is the only free-standing house in the block. The front (south) elevation has at the O Street walk a 3' high brick retaining wall supporting an embankment topped by a 2 1/2' hedgerow.
2. Enclosures: There is a chain link fence along the west side of the lot, a wood lattice fence on the east side of the driveway, and a wrought-and-cast-iron fence from the southwest corner to the O Street sidewalk.
3. Outbuildings: There is a modern two-car red brick garage at the rear of the property.
4. Walks: Walks are of concrete, flagstone, and brick.
5. Landscaping: There is miscellaneous shrubbery across the south front, and a formal garden with some large boxwoods on the east end. The rear court is paved.

Prepared by The Office of
Walter G. Peter, Jr., AIA
Architect
April, 1969